

Tennessee Pollution Prevention Partnership Success Story



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Reuse Of Oil Absorbents Helps Environment and Saves Dollars

The Member

Calsonic Kansei North America, Inc. (CKNA) is a major manufacturer of quality electronic components, aluminum and plastic cooling systems, front-end, and cockpit assemblies for most major automobile manufacturers. CKNA operates two sites in Shelbyville employing over 1000 associates. Since operations began in 1984, CKNA has been recognized as an employer of choice with a clean environmental and safety record. Goals of Calsonic Kansei include offering the "world's most appropriate design" and the "world's most appropriate supply". Customers are provided Quality, Cost, Delivery and Development that ensure customer satisfaction in countries throughout the world. To this end, technical centers have been established in Japan, Europe and the U.S. Production is conducted at over forty facilities, based in fourteen countries worldwide. Additionally, Calsonic Kansei promotes alternative fuels, recycling, air purification, and elimination of harmful materials including chlorofluorocarbons.

The Story

CKNA utilizes various oil absorbent materials throughout the production processes and testing. Historically, these absorbent materials have been packed in 55-gallon drums (approximately 600/year), loaded into a 30-yard container, and trucked to a Class D "special waste" landfill for disposal at an average rate of 50 drums/month. In early 2004, the CKNA environmental management team evaluated numerous options in an effort to identify a more feasible and cost-effective method of disposal. Ultimately, the team contacted Circle Environmental, a commercial company that rewashes absorbent materials, recycles any amount of oil drained or centrifuged, and returns them to CKNA for reuse. Circle Environmental demonstrated that

they could remove the oil from the materials and return them in a "like new" condition for reuse, totally eliminating this waste stream.

The Success

The oil-impregnated absorbent materials are still being collected in 55-gallon drums, but instead of being landfilled, the drums of oil and absorbents are trucked to a Circle Environmental facility. At the recycle facility, the materials are placed in a centrifuge, where approximately 96 percent of the oil (estimated at <200 gal/year) is removed and captured for recycling. The absorbents are subsequently washed, the drums and centrifuge-dried absorbents are returned to CKNA for reuse, and the oil is sold to a recycler. As a result of this seemingly simple improvement, CKNA recouped valuable storage space, reduced labor taken over by the recycling company, reduced the risk of back injury, saved landfill space, and reduced costs. This change in operating practice provides cost savings for CKNA. The savings include \$18K in absorbents previously thrown away, \$7K for drums, and \$62K in disposal charges. Subtracting the \$30-35K for the cost of this recycle program yields approximately \$52-57,000 in annual savings.

The Pollution Prevented

Six hundred drums of oil-impregnated absorbent materials have been diverted from the landfill annually, saving 4400 cubic feet of landfill space per year. This project also keeps oil, which is now recycled, out of CKNA's waste stream. Additionally, by not having these drums on site or handling them, the chance for spills and potential stormwater discharges is greatly reduced.

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